

Message Text

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ACTION HA-02

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 7308

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, ELAB, PINS, KS
SUBJ: EXPULSION OF FOREIGN MISSIONARY: STATUS OF URBAN INDUSTRIAL
MISSION

REF: STATE 209269, SEOUL 6141

1. STEPHEN LAVENDER, AN AUSTRALIAN PRESBYTERIAN LAY MISSIONARY WHO WORKED WITH THE URBAN INDUSTRIAL MISSION (UIM), LEFT KOREA IN JUNE THIS YEAR WHEN THE ROKG REFUSED TO RENEW HIS RESIDENCE PERMIT. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY DISCUSSED THE MATTER WITH THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS SHORTLY AFTER HIS DEPARTURE.

2. THE ROKG ACTION MAY BE INTERPRETED AS A HARASSMENT OF THE UIM, BUT WE BELIEVE ACTION FLOWED FROM ROKG RELUCTANCE TO PERMIT FOREIGNERS TO INVOLVE THEMSELVES IN SPECIFIC LABOR DISPUTES, A SITUATION IN WHICH MR LAVENDER SOMETIMES FOUND HIMSELF.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, IN PERIOD FROM MAY TO JULY, ROKG UNDERTOOK A NUMBER OF ACTIONS DESIGNED TO HARASS UIM. HOWEVER, AS NOTED IN SEOUL 6141, ROKG BEGAN BACKING OFF PRESSURE ON UIM IN JULY, AND TODAY REMAINING POINT OF CONFRONTATION
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BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND UIM IS TRIAL OF REVS IN MYONG-CHIN AND CHO CHI-SONG. THIS TRIAL IS STILL BEING HEARD IN DISTRICT COURT. HOWEVER, WE HAVE LEARNED ON STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL BASIS FROM UIM THAT AUTHORITIES HAVE OFFERED CONCESSION EVEN ON THIS ISSUE. AUTHORITIES HAVE INFORMED REV CHO THAT IF DISTRICT COURT FINDS HIM AND REV IN GUILTY AND IF THEY DO NOT APPEAL THE COURT'S DECISION, THE

ROKG WILL NOT REQUIRE THEM TO SERVE ANY SENTENCE WHICH MIGHT BE IMPOSED. REV CHO DOES NOT WISH THIS INFORMATION TO BE MADE PUBLIC, AND UIM HAS NOT YET DECIDED ON RESPONSE TO OFFER. ACCEPTANCE OF OFFER WOULD RETURN ROKG-UIM RELATIONS TO NEUTRAL ONCE MORE.

4. ROKG HAS PERIODICALLY HARASSED UIM, AND SINCE BOTH GOVERNMENT AND UIM ARE HIGHLY SUSPICIOUS OF EACH OTHER, WE CAN EXPECT STRAINS TO APPEAR IN THEIR RELATIONS FROM TIME TO TIME. REMAINDER OF TRIAL MAY GIVE APPEARANCE OF CONTINUED PRESSURE FOR SEVERAL MORE WEEKS, BUT GOVERNMENT CLEARLY MOVING IN DIRECTION OF TRUCE FOR THE TIME BEING. IF UIM DECIDES TO APPEAL DISTRICT COURT DECISION, CASE WILL DRAG ON A COUPLE OF MONTHS MORE, REV IN WILL LIKELY REMAIN IN CUSTODY, AND ROKG MAY RETHINK WISDOM OF ITS CURRENT EFFORTS TO BURY THE HATCHET.
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